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CIA director speaks softly

Casey's mumbling contributed to furor over Nicaragua mining

By Richard Whittle

Washington Bureau of The News

WASHINGTON — When William Casey talks, members of the House and Senate Intelligence committees listen — but some say they often can't hear.

The CIA director, who turned 71 last month, speaks in a voice as wispy as his thin white hair. Like the Allied agents he helped infiltrate behind German lines as a World War II officer in the Office of Strategic Services, Casey's words have a way of fading murkily into the ether.

"I think I am not being unkind to say (that) Mr. Casey is not known for having high marks in elocation; that it's not always clear what exactly is being said when he is talking," said Sen. William S. Cohen, a Maine Republican who sits on the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Waxing unintelligible is so much Casey's trademark that even President Reagan has joked about it. He has said that one of Casey's assets as head of the nation's top spy agency is that he requires no electronic "scrambler" to garble his telephone conversations as a guard against interception.

Far from just an amusing quirk, Casey's mumbling has been a factor in his dispute with members of the Senate Intelligence Committee over whether he properly informed them of the CIA's direct role in mining Nicaragua's harbors.

Casey took the extraordinary step of paying personal "fence-mending" calls on committee members last week and even signed a formal memorandum of apology at the behest of Sens. Lloyd Bentsen, D-Texas, and Richard Lugar, R-Ind.

But Casey, who declined through a spokesman to be interviewed, was slow to admit any error. At first he had CIA officials issue statements saying he had complied with the 1980 Intelligence Oversight Act, which requires him to keep Congress "fully and currently informed" of any "significant" intelligence operations.

As a result, before his apology, Casey's relations with the Senate committee had grown so sour that some members were suggesting that he resign.

Though it is not likely that Reagan would ask him to quit, it is less likely that Casey would volunteer to leave a job that has let him delve again into the mysterious world of secret intelligence operations, which by his own past admission he came to love as a young OSS officer.

Whatever the course of his future dealings with Capitol Hill, it is widely agreed that the episode has raised the ghost of the sinister, headstrong image the CIA acquired after 1970s revelations of past CIA assassination plots and coups.

It is no secret that Casey has a special bond with the clandestine service — the arm of the organization that plots and implements covert programs in the realms of propaganda, political intrigue and paramilitary operations — based on his experience in the kind of work they do. It is said that he has even gone into Central America himself, traveling in unmarked planes, to check on the progress of his agency's operations.

For that reason, said a former intelligence official who has worked with Casey personally, the director is unlikely to change his ways without direct orders from Congress. The former official asked not to be identified.

"Running the clandestine service," the official said, "well, he just loves to do it."

Some of Casey's supporters disagree that his affinity for covert action has hurt the agency's image. Former CIA Director William L. Colby, for one, said the congressional furor reflects no distrust of Casey but merely a lack of consensus on whether the CIA's Nicaraguan operations are wise.

But the controversy appears to have killed whatever chances the administration had of getting the House to approve \$21 million to resupply the CIA-backed rebels, known as *contras*, who are warring against Nicaragua's Marxist Sandinista government.

Cohen and other Senate committee members are still saying that while Casey may have referred during March briefings to mines being placed in Nicaragua's harbors, the words he used and his customary mumbling prevented the committee from understanding the CIA's role in placing them.

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JACK ANDERSON

'Voodoo Gap' Looms as Latest Weapons Crisis

I have reported previously on secret projects to adapt psychic phenomena to military purposes. For example, in laboratory experiments, psychics have been used to spy on the Soviets by projecting their minds outside their bodies.

One psychic was able to describe a secret Soviet base in astonishing detail that was later confirmed by satellite photographs. Another located a Soviet Tu95 "Backfire" bomber that had crashed in Africa.

U.S. Navy and Air Force chiefs are skeptical about these experiments, which they describe scornfully as "witchcraft" and "black magic." But the Army's intelligence chief, Lt. Gen. William Odom, has been impressed with some of the results.

Odom is worried about intelligence reports that the Soviets are far ahead in psychic research. Inside the Pentagon, he has raised the question of whether the Soviets could use psychics to penetrate our secret vaults. This has led to talk in the backrooms about raising a "psychic shield" to block this sort of remote spying.

The CIA also is taking psychic research seriously. Former CIA director Stansfield Turner told critics that their skepticism about the CIA's psychic projects was healthy but that the research should keep pace with their skepticism.

The most impressive research in this area has been conducted by Harold Puthoff and Russell Targ, both respected academics with the Stanford Research Institute in Menlo Park, Calif. Puthoff is still with the institute; Targ left two years ago to form his own company, Delphi Associates. They began their experiments in the early 1970s, using psychics to describe scenes at specific coordinates on the globe. The project, partly funded by the Defense Department and the CIA, was called "Scanate" for "scan by coordinate."

Their latest project, code-named "Grill Flame," produced some amazing results. Psychics described the contents of locked filing cabinets; they mentally breached the security of secret military installations.

Earlier, they had discovered the rings around Jupiter years before their existence was scientifically established by photographs.

Despite these impressive achievements, sources told my associates Dale Van Atta and Joseph Spear that the psychics' success rate is only about 70 percent. For example, psychics who were asked by the Penta-

gon to pinpoint the place where Italian Red Brigade terrorists were holding Brig. Gen. James Dozier prisoner in January, 1982, did not come close.

But the occasional successes encourage intelligence officials to keep trying in hopes of giving remote spying more respectability. They also are concerned about the Soviets who are known to have spent many more years and far more money on parapsychological research.

At the risk of being ridiculed over a "voodoo gap," advocates like Rep. Charlie Rose (D-N.C.), support continued research into the more promising areas of this mysterious field. After all, the atomic bomb was once thought to be a harebrained idea. It's safe to say that many things considered utterly fantastic today will be accepted as commonplace by the end of the century.

Ex-director fears mining furor will hurt CIA

By Fred Smith
Yavapai County Bureau

SEDONA — Espionage is a dirty word again.

The howls from Congress over CIA-directed activities in Nicaragua have been long and loud. Even Arizona Sen. Barry Goldwater, a staunch Republican and longtime defender of the spy guys, has gotten into the act with his criticism of the mining of Nicaraguan harbors.

And if Goldwater, the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, has joined the critics, enough said for Stansfield Turner, the retired admiral who headed the CIA during the Carter years.

During an interview last week at his winter home in Sedona, Turner referred to Goldwater's "scathing letter" to the White House as a tell-tale sign.

"The letter is evidence that the administration is guilty of gross neglect in failing to inform Congress of the mining," he said. "It has broken the spirit of the law (covering covert activities) in not letting Congress know about this action."

"And I'm worried that this will hurt the CIA, because the agency could wind up with a tighter noose around its neck."

That noose may come in the form of more-stringent oversight procedures, which Turner thinks had been finely tuned during the early part of his tenure at the CIA.

Tighter reins over the agency's intelligence-gathering procedures won't do the agency much good, Turner said.

"The U.S. can't get along without the CIA," he said. "We're the only country in the world with a single, central organization that does something in all areas of intelligence."

Turner spent more than half of his 60 years in the Navy. A graduate of the Naval Academy, he saw action in the Korean and Vietnam wars. His resume includes the presidency of the Naval War College, command of the 2nd Fleet and the NATO Striking Fleet Atlantic and chief of allied forces in southern Europe.

He cherished his days at sea. To Turner, shore duty represented a small role in a giant force. At sea, his challenge was taking a group of men and molding them into a team.

Turner tried this in the CIA, which he took over in 1977. His efforts to weed out the excess resulted in the dismissals of hundreds of intelligence agents. He also tried to ease the advent of congressional oversight in an agency that had few, if any, watchdogs during the first 25 years of its existence.

And, unlike his predecessors, he appeared in the public arena in an attempt to reveal, if only a little, the realities of the spy game.

He appeared on television and in the newspapers.

He opened a speech to the American Forging Association convention in Scottsdale a few years ago with, "Fellow forgers, you and I have the only legal forging business in the U.S."

He was quick to note that the association delegates dealt in metal.

It would be hard to imagine anyone saying anything like that in the pre-Turner years.

Secrecy continues.

Only a handful of people knows how big the CIA is; fewer still know what its budget is or where the real action is. The guy running the toy store down the street could be an operative.

Espionage was full of perils when Turner was at the CIA helm.

His critics were fond of pointing to the CIA's failure to forecast the fall of the shah of Iran. In retrospect, Turner said, warnings would have not changed the Iranian situation, nor would they have given anyone the chance to prevent the shah's downfall.

Far worse, according to Turner, was a CIA report in 1979 that said the Soviet Union had established a combat brigade in Cuba.

"That report was not totally in error, but it was misleading and it had a deleterious effect on SALT II," Turner said. "Senator (Frank) Church (then chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee) said he would never permit the agreement to get out of his committee with the Soviets in Cuba."

The agreement limiting strategic arms has yet to be ratified by the Senate.

The top accomplishment during Turner's four years with the CIA is one he said he can't talk about, other than to say it resulted in a "significant impact on history."

Another Turner-administrated coup, which is open to record, was the CIA's success in establishing a means to verify Soviet compliance with the SALT I agreement.

"We can now say SALT is working, because both the United States and the Soviet Union are adhering to it," he said.

The agency is filled with honorable people, according to Turner.

"But they are put in very difficult situations," he said. "For example, the morals have changed in the last 20 years, and they will continue to change. It's hard to put people under stresses and temptations that are abnormal to government and then 10 years later chew them out for it."

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So the United States probably always will have a CIA to gather information in the political, economic and military sectors.

This winter was Turner's second in Sedona. He has an office on the second floor of his home, which overlooks the towering red rocks that buffer the north end of town.

He is in great demand as a speaker and writes for opinion pages in the country's leading newspapers. The only drawback about Sedona, he said, is its lack of a political world.

"If I were in Washington today, I'd probably be on the *CBS Evening News* talking about Nicaragua," said Turner, who also maintains a home in McLean, Va.

Turner's role in shaping part of the agency's future will be dealt with in a book he is compiling about the CIA. *Secrecy and Democracy — A Revolution in Spying* is to be printed near the end of the year.

"For the CIA, there has been a revolution in gathering information," Turner said. "We have to have oversight. But we still need secrets."